



NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Secretary

50 Harry S. Truman Parkway

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Julie Oberg
410-841-5889

MDA Clarifies Fertilizer Rules for Small Grains and Cover Crops

ANNAPOLIS, MD (February 14, 2013) – The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) today clarified its guidelines concerning winter nutrient applications for farmers growing small grains. The guidelines apply to all farmers growing small grains, including those enrolled in the commodity option of the MDA Cover Crop Program administered through the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program.

Although the MACS contract agreement restricts nutrient applications to commodity cover crops before March 1, Maryland's revised nutrient management regulations allow top dressing of small grains prior to March 1, under certain conditions, in accordance with University of Maryland nutrient recommendations. The regulations also include provisions which allow organic nutrient applications to be made in winter for certain crops, including small grains. MDA is modifying this particular MACS requirement this year in order to reduce confusion in light of its revised nutrient management regulations. Therefore, all farmers growing small grains – including those enrolled in the commodity option of the MDA Cover Crop Program—may apply either commercial fertilizer or organic nutrient sources as early as February 15, in accordance with their nutrient management plans. Manure applications made to small grains are not required to be incorporated consistent with the Department's interpretation that the small grains are an existing crop similar to hay and pasture and therefore exempt from the requirement to incorporate.

The regulations limit this green-up application that is allowed after February 15 to no more than 50 percent of the spring nitrogen recommendation and 50 percent of the application is done after growth stage Feekes 5-6 or 1350 growing degree days.

For additional information on MDA Cover Crop Program provisions, farmers should contact their local soil conservation district or the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program at [410-841-5864](tel:410-841-5864). Questions about winter nutrient applications should be directed to the Nutrient Management Program at [410-841-5959](tel:410-841-5959).

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